

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Representatives Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA) and Thomas Massie (R-KY) introduced the bipartisan "Justice Safety Valve Act of 2013," which would give federal judges the flexibility to issue sentences below mandatory minimums. Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) and Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, introduced sister legislation on March 20, 2013.

"Mandatory minimum sentences have been shown to mandate unjust results," said Rep. Scott. "They have a racially discriminatory impact, studies conclude that they waste the taxpayer's money, and they often violate common sense."

"The one size fits all approach of federally mandated minimums does not give local judges the latitude they need to ensure that punishments fit the crimes," said Rep. Massie. "As a result, nonviolent offenders are sometimes given excessive sentences. Furthermore, public safety can be compromised because violent offenders are released from our nation's overcrowded prisons to make room for nonviolent offenders."

Mandatory minimums force federal judges to issue indiscriminate punishments, regardless of involvement or criminal history. The Justice Safety Valve Act of 2013 would expand the current "safety valve" provision to include all federal crimes, allowing federal judges to tailor sentences on a case-by-case basis. This would also reduce the bloated federal prison population.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons represents over 25% of the Department of Justice annual budget, and encumbers resources otherwise available to law enforcement and other community safety programs.

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